The Magical Body: Power, Fame and Meaning in a Melanesian Society, by Richard Eves. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998. ISBN 90-5702-305-9, xxii + 302 pages, figures, maps, photographs, notes, bibliography. US$59.

The prevailing metaphor in Lelet culture is that of the sunrise. This image encapsulates ideas of creation, or "coming into being," and revelation, or uncovering knowledge and insight. For the Lelet, the world is both always already there and constantly being discovered. These tropes form the crux of Richard Eves' ethnography, *The Magical Body: Power, Fame and Meaning in a Melanesian Society.* They are also, in a sense, a trope for the practice of ethnographic fieldwork and the attempt to interpret and describe another culture. Eves sees meaning as a combination of lived experience and shadowy extrasensory knowledge that is revealed from time to time in magical practices.

The book has several foci. It is an examination of Lelet magical practices; it is a discussion of agency and personhood among the Lelet; it is a rich analysis of mortuary ritual; and it is a discourse on bodiliness, movement, and experience. By the end, most of these foci are brought to bear on a discussion of power and intentionality within community leadership. Eves claims that one can only understand the Lelet culture and society by examining the way the people perceive their relations and experiences rather than relying on empiricist observation. His principle example relates to food. Although on the surface the Lelet have abundant gardens and surplus food to sell for cash income, they perceive themselves as being in a state of famine or impending famine. There are various reasons for this perspective, and Eves traces and analyzes the different modalities. The conversion to Christianity has meant that most Lelet have abandoned magic, especially garden magic, which previously ensured the fecundity of their crops. With no ready substitute, Lelet are loath to assume a successful outcome for their productive activities. Colonialism and postcolonialism have created other changes as well; in particular the changing patterns of relations and exchange with the coastal tribes has altered the Lelet perception of self-sufficiency. The Lelet, who live in the inland plateau of New Ireland, Papua New Guinea, are excellent gardeners and thus provide a good deal of taro to the coastal and urban populations of New Ireland. This is their main source of cash. They see the flow of taro to the coast, however, as a loss to themselves. Because taro is constantly leaving their community, the Lelet are at risk of famine.

Flow and movement, including the flow of taro, are complex qualities for the Lelet. On the one hand, lightness, speed, and movement are highly desired and masculine qualities. These attributes are epitomized in the men's dances. On the other hand, heaviness and rootedness are important metaphors of social stability and fecundity. These qualities and their gendered opposition are widespread in Melanesia, and Eves draws some analogies with work such as Munn's. From his discussion of these qualities, however, I think even stronger connections could be made and a deeper interpretation reached. Eves discusses light-

ness and movement as bodily qualities, but they are also moral qualities. Movement and its association with lightness and heaviness are expressions of a person's moral and social value. Antisocial persons are greedy, heavy, and enclosed. Powerful and productive people are quick and light. The problem with this dichotomy, and one Eves does not entirely work out, is that these positive attributes can only really be embodied by men, while women embody the less overtly positive attributes. Eves admits that these "less positive" attributes do have positive as well as negative connotations, but he does not address the ramifications of this complexity. He would do well to examine how others such as Munn (1986) deal with the many layers of meaning in a similar cosmology.

The core of Eves' work is his discussion of Lelet magic. Magic, as noted, is strongly connected to various important Lelet activities, the most important of which is food production. In the past, magic was employed toward a variety of ends such as love, weather, and food production. Although the Lelet claim that their magic was not primarily malicious (in contrast to the real sorcery of the coastal people), it still came into conflict with church doctrine. Converts, especially the charismatic Christian converts of the last two decades, have given up performing magic. Despite its receding place in Lelet day-to-day life, it retains a symbolic and emotional place. Magic ensures the proper outcome of life and activities. For this reason, it is still performed when preparing mortuary feasts. Mortuary ritual consists of a series of feasts that mark the transformation of the deceased. They are the most elaborate rituals stemming from the precontact culture. Eves, however, does not attempt to interpret why magic is still performed for these events and why it has given way to Christianity in virtually all other contexts.

Despite its diminishing presence in Lelet life, Eves gives magic a central theoretical place in his work. He is critical of most theoretical approaches to magic, because they try to interpret magic in terms of western explanatory frameworks. Instead he favors the more historically contextual and interpretive approaches of theorists like Taussig. Despite a somewhat lengthy discussion of theories of magic, Eves does not really elaborate his own theoretical approach. He does not address the question of why magic plays such a central role in social activities. Although not boldly theoretical, Eves produces a very fine description of the social context in which magic is performed and gives a series of rich interpretations of particular magical spells in the tradition of Michelle Rosaldo and Stanley Tambiah.

Mortuary feasts have widespread importance in New Ireland ethnography, and Eves' description of the elaborate cycle of feasts places the Lelet firmly in this tradition. Eves emphasizes that the current feasts are a transformation of traditional feasts and have become an arena for manipulation of power and leadership. One makes a name by being talked about. The more people who attend a feast, the more widely the feast giver's name will be circulated. In order to be successful at creating a name, one has to have an open self and body and be able to move things—valuables and food primarily. These values are

important for leadership. Present-day feasts appear to be influenced by Lelet knowledge of power systems elsewhere in New Ireland and beyond. As Eves describes it, clan leadership is being manipulated through feasting and exchange in ways that evoke big-men politics and intentionality elsewhere in Papua New Guinea.

This book is a good ethnography. It blends traditional anthropological concerns of kinship and production with an investigation of culture change and transformation. It examines the interface between social structures and social persons and between culture, cognition, and a more embodied understanding of movement and activity in a cultural context. Eves has integrated the Lelet into the cultural and historical map of Melanesian ethnography.

JANE FAJANS
Cornell University

* * *

Cultures of Secrecy: Reinventing Race in Bush Kaliai Cargo Cults, by Andrew Lattas. New Directions in Anthropological Writing: History, Poetics, Cultural Criticism. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998. ISBN 0-299-15800-4, cloth; 0-299-15804-7, paper; xliv + 360 pages, maps, glossary, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, US$59.95; paper, US$24.95.

Over the last decade, Andrew Lattas has published a series of articles that have established him as one of the foremost students of race and of the colonial and postcolonial dynamics of power in Melanesia. Original and provocative, these articles often overflowed with novel insights and suggestive asides that had to be left undeveloped or unsupported as Lattas pursued his main arguments. Because these pieces were stuffed full in this way, they gave the impression that Lattas's thinking was unduly constrained by the article form. This book has thus been long awaited as a forum in which Lattas's writing could find its natural gait and his ideas could receive the full development they warranted. Even in the face of such high expectations, *Cultures of Secrecy* does not disappoint; compared to the articles, the ethnography is richer here, the arguments more completely worked through, and the authorial voice, while still powerful, more relaxed and carefully modulated. These qualities combine to make the book, among other things, the most important full-scale study of a regional tradition of cargo cults to have appeared in many years.

At the heart of the book is the important claim that in order for people to contemplate change they must find a space outside their everyday lives from which they can view those lives critically and creatively. For the Bush Kaliai of West New Britain, the stimulus to change has been the coming of the colonial order. Yet that colonial order was too punishing and in some ways too distant to become itself a place from which the change it stimulated could be effected. Instead, for Bush Kaliai men the necessary spaces of creative distance (or "alterity" in Lattas's terms) were provided by the underground world of the ancestors and by the social territory occupied by women. Not only were